



Friendship Evangelism

One: Why Friendship Evangelism?

iFOLLOW

Working with Jesus

The iFollow Discipleship Series

About the iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition

Categories

The iFollow Discipleship Series is designed to be used in congregations to assist people in their pursuit of God. This assumes that individuals are in unique places in their journey and there is no perfect set of lessons that everyone must complete to become a disciple—in fact discipleship is an eternal journey. Therefore the iFollow curriculum is a menu of milestones that an individual, small group, or even an entire church can choose from. The lessons can be placed in three general categories: **Meeting with Jesus** (does not assume a commitment to Jesus Christ); **Walking with Jesus** (assumes an acceptance of Jesus Christ); and **Working with Jesus** (assumes a desire to serve Jesus Christ).

Components

Each lesson has a presenter's manuscript which can be read word for word, but will be stronger if the presenter puts it in his/her own words and uses personal illustrations. The graphic slides can be played directly from the Pastor's DVD or customized and played from a computer. There are also several group activities and discussion questions to choose from as well as printable student handouts.

Usage

The lessons are designed to be used in small groups, pastor's Bible classes, prayer meetings, seminars, retreats, training sessions, discussion groups, and some lessons may be appropriate sermon outlines.

Credits

Curriculum Development: The iFollow Discipleship Series Pastor's Edition curriculum development was lead by the **Center for Creative Ministry**. **General Editor:** Monte Sahlin; **Assistant Editor:** Debbonnaire Kovacs; **Directional Advisory:** Brad Forbes, Carole Kilcher, Ceri Myers, Cesar Gonzalez, Clayton Kinney, Curtis Rittenour, Dave Osborne, Dave VanDenburgh, Gerry Chudleigh, Jane Thayer, Jerry Thomas, John Appel, Jose Rojas, Kim Johnson, Nicole Chao, Paul Richardson, Rich DuBose, Shasta Nelson, William Sutton; **Pastoral Advisory:** Claudio Consuegra, Collette Pekar, Dave Hutman, Don Driver, Fredrick Russell, Jerry Nelson, Jesse Wilson, Leslie Bumgardner, Loren Fenton, Rebecca Brillhart; **Unit Authors:** Alberto Valenzuela, Althea Pineda, Corienne Hay, Debbonnaire Kovacs, Ed Dickerson, Gianluca Bruno, Gil Bahnsen, Greg Nelson, Jack Calkins, James Whibberding, Karen Collum, Monte Sahlin, Norma Sahlin, Pam Splawinski, Patty Ntuhuka, Reinder Bruinsma, Ryan Bell; **Additional contribution** by Maria Ovando-Gibson; **Additional editing:** Dave Gemmell, Meredith Carter; **Graphic Design:** Mind Over Media; **Layout:** Paul D. Young; **Web Development:** Narrow Gate Media.

License

iFollow Discipleship Pastor's Edition is produced by the NAD Church Resource Center for use by Seventh-day Adventist Congregations in Bermuda, Canada, and the United States. Churches may freely copy the lessons and PowerPoints for use within their congregations. Any other usage is prohibited without prior written consent from the NAD Church Resource Center. iFollow Discipleship, Copyright 2010, the North American Division Corporation of Seventh-day Adventists. NAD Church Resource Center, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904, 301-680-6339.



www.ifollowdiscipleship.org

Friendship Evangelism One: Why Friendship Evangelism?

This presentation is designed for people who desire to serve Jesus Christ and help lead others to Him.

Learning Objectives

1. Introduce the concept of Friendship Evangelism
2. Share the research that undergirds this approach
3. Teach the Adventist paradigm for personal ministry from Ellen White (*The Ministry of Healing*, page 143)
4. Challenge participants to think of unchurched people in their personal network

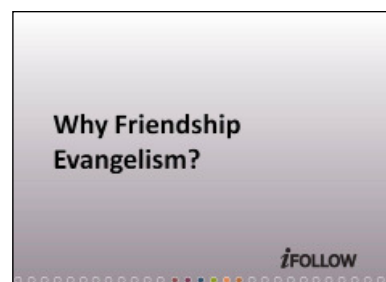
Content Outline

1. Definition of “friendship evangelism”
2. Adventist research on this topic
3. Church of Christ research on this topic
4. Reaching secular people
6. Why church members do not share their faith
7. An Adventist paradigm for personal ministry

Background Material for the Presenter

Let’s begin by defining friendship evangelism. Most people become Christians and join the church because of a friend, a relative or someone they know. In the late 1970s, Dr. Gottfried Oosterwal, director of the Institute for World Mission at the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary at Andrews University, did a major survey on why people join the church. The study showed that two-thirds to three-fourths of Seventh-day Adventists say the main reason they joined the church is because of a relative, a friend, or a neighbor who told them about the church.

A 1993 world survey conducted for the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists also confirmed this.



Friendship evangelism is the natural way that people come to Christ and join the church. More recent research has continued to reveal the same reality.

To define it precisely, friendship evangelism is an unstructured, informal, conversational approach to sharing faith in the context of everyday life. It often happens in a secular context while you are working with somebody in the office, classroom, shop or lab where you make your living. It occurs while having a conversation during a coffee break, at the supermarket or service station with people you know.

It's not a program. It's not structured. It can't be organized. It's the informal way that people share faith with one another. It is the most powerful form of evangelism in the church. Friendship evangelism is the natural outflow of a life that's connected to Christ.



Adventist Research

The Center for Creative Ministry conducted a study with churches on the West Coast that have a strong track record with winning new generations of younger adults. Members of these churches were asked, "What have you observed to be the most effective method for bringing new members into your local church?"

Nearly 80 percent of people say friends, relatives, acquaintances, and people talking to people are what we observe to be the way most people come into our congregations.

Around two-thirds reported it to be small group ministries. That's also a relational approach.

The third most reported way to bring people into the church is through community service and recreation activities. The way these things bring people into the church is through opportunities for people to rub shoulders with each other, talk informally, and form friendships.

Way down the list, maybe one-third of the people named some of the traditional evangelistic program such as Revelation Seminars, a pastor's Bible class, or public meetings. Bible lessons are at the end of the list.

You might think this study was conducted on an elite, avant-garde set of churches. Not so. The same question was asked in a larger sample of all churches—urban, rural, small, and large. The numbers are lower because many of these churches are not growing, and members don't observe many new people coming in as compared to the first study. But

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

Friendship
Evangelism
One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?

2

friendship evangelism is the top category, and some of the more traditional approaches are way down the list.

Church of Christ Research

Another piece of research outside Adventist churches confirms the critical role of friendship evangelism in retaining members of the church. The Church of Christ denomination is headquartered in Texas and has about 300,000 members.

After a yearlong emphasis on evangelism in most of its churches, a Church of Christ seminary did in-depth research on how people come to Christ and come into the church. More than 1,200 in-depth, face-to-face interviews were done during this year of evangelism. People fell into three categories with about 400 in each.

First, there were about 400 converts still active in the church more than a year after joining. The next category involved converts that dropped out that first year. Finally, there were about 400 people who did NOT join the church, despite being contacted, and attending small groups, seminars, and evangelistic meetings.

During these 1,200 interviews, the question was asked, “Who was the person that contacted you about becoming a Christian and joining the church?” The follow-up question was “What relationship do you have with that person?” Although the primary reason for doing the survey was to assess certain evangelistic programs, these questions resulted in some of the most important findings.

A high correlation of responses was discovered among each of these three groups. Among those who didn’t become converts, most said, “That person was a religious teacher.” Among those who joined the church but dropped out within the first year, people said, “This person was a religious salesman.” But among those who accepted Christ, joined the church, and a year later were still active members, many replied, “This person was a friend of mine.” In many cases they meant this was somebody they knew before the evangelism emphasis came along.

In a high percentage of cases among the “dropouts” and “unconverted,” the person who contacted them was a stranger, someone who came to their door. The bottom line is that people come to Christ and into the church and stay primarily through relationships.

Reaching Secular People

Friendships are especially needed with what we might call the “hard to reach” category;



the unchurched, secular person who's not interested in religion. Many think of religious broadcasting as a powerful evangelistic tool. But nine out of ten Americans never listen to religious broadcasting. Imagine asking how many have tuned into the basket-weaving channel on cable television. Most people won't know if there is a basket-weaving channel because they are not interested in it.

The primary way to reach unchurched people is through personal relationships. You probably know some individuals who are not interested in religion of any kind. They are not actively opposed to it. They don't disbelieve. Their response is, "It's good for you, but I'm not very interested."

The only way we will ever reach these people is at the personal level. They are not going to come to any kind of Bible seminar. They are not going to join a program. The only way we will be able to bring Christ to them is at a personal level.

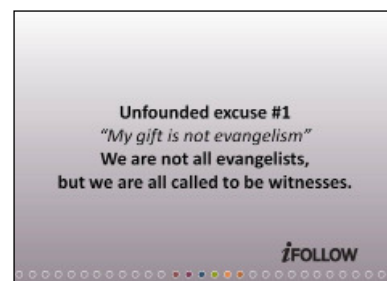
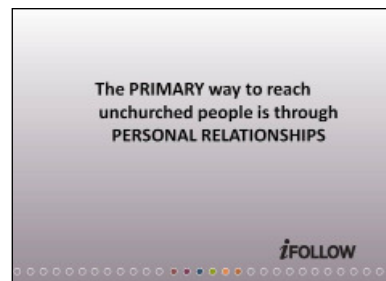
In fact, you are the person most likely to reach the people within your circle of acquaintances. If we were to ask you to jot down the names of everybody you know, assuming you are an average North American, you probably could write down 100 to 200 names. People in your circle who aren't Christians and don't belong to a church are more likely to respond to you than to any evangelist, media ministry, literature, clergy, or church program. You are in a better position to bring them to Christ than any of these.

Why We Don't Share Our Faith

Perhaps you have thought about sharing your faith, but then said to yourself, "I know what my spiritual gift is, and it's not evangelism." In fast-growing congregations, less than 10 percent of the members have the gift of evangelism.

We are not all evangelists, but we are called to be **witnesses**. A witness responds when they are asked to answer a question. An evangelist is much more assertive about what they have to say and in finding opportunities.

Friendship evangelism is not about the world **out there**. It's about people you already know in your circle of influence. This is not about strangers. It is about your relatives, neighbors, and work associates. It's not asking you to knock on doors and find people. It's asking you to respond to the people around you who **already** bring up their needs, beliefs, and values in conversations with you.



Others may say, “I’m too shy to talk about religion.” An article in *U.S. News & World Report* says 48 percent of Americans say they are shy. These people usually don’t initiate a conversation. When they have to talk in a meeting—even a simple one—they feel their blood pressure go up.

Being shy is typical for many Christians. Remember, friendship evangelism isn’t about aggressive behavior. It’s about simply being a good friend. This is not about bringing up religious topics. This is about responding when people around you bring up the topic. This is not about strangers. It’s about people you already know, are comfortable with, and spend time with anyway. If you don’t talk about faith, you are going to talk about fishing, or tires, or getting your hair cut, or your children.

Some people may think, “I don’t really know what to do.” Friendship evangelism is **not** about memorizing a little speech or testimony. It is **not** about giving a Bible study or a certain kind of logic that will convince people.

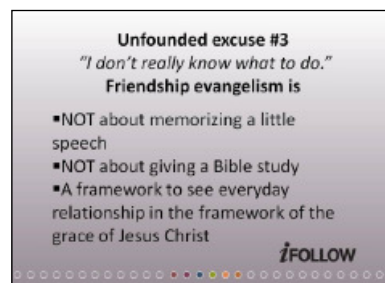
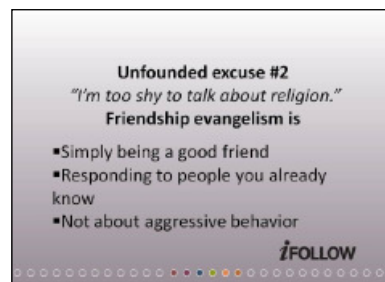
It’s simply a framework that enables you to see your everyday relationships in terms of the grace of Jesus Christ. The underlying theological idea is that if you are a believer, then the grace of Jesus Christ is present in your life. How will this grace in your life touch the lives of the people around you?

Friendship evangelism is relating to people on the basis of compassion, sympathy, kindness, and caring. It is about listening to hear the needs of people. It is about watching for their readiness to discuss the basic issues of faith. And it is about sharing your own faith.

Obviously, if you don’t have faith, you don’t have anything to share. This curriculum assumes that God is working in your life and that you have something to share. Not that you’re perfect or would want to hold yourself up as an example. As a matter of fact, among unchurched people, there is a widespread feeling that they aren’t good enough to be a Christian. An average Christian—a person who is honest about their own struggles—may be a more compelling example than a perfect Christian who appears polished and without flaws.

An Adventist Paradigm for Sharing Your Faith

There is an Adventist paradigm for friendship evangelism in our heritage. A paradigm is a model, framework, or example through which we see and act. Ellen White wrote a statement originally published in the book *The Ministry of Healing*. On page 143 she speaks of Christ’s example as our model for ministry.



“Christ’s method alone gives true success in reaching people.”

Notice the implication that some successful evangelism does not constitute true success in God’s eyes. Remember that category from the Church of Christ research of people who said that a “salesman” brought them into the church but before a year was over they were back out?

As we continue with the quote from Ellen White, notice the verbs. “The Savior **mingled** with men as one who desired their good. He **showed** his sympathy for them, **ministered** to their needs, and **won** their confidence. Then he **bade** them, ‘Follow me.’” (Emphasis supplied.) These five verbs progress deeper and deeper into a relationship; mingling, showing sympathy, ministering to needs, winning trust, and inviting people to follow Jesus.

Notice how the first three actions **flow out** from the Christian. When you win the trust and confidence of a person, it **comes back**. You can’t force people to trust you. They may say they trust you if they are pressed, but it is not for real. Trust has to be given freely by others in response to our genuine love, a love that is visible. The paradigm has a two-way action: it flows **out** and then comes **back**.

The quote from Ellen White next says, “Then he bade them.” **Bade** is an old English word. In modern English we get bids for things in business. A bid is a document that says, “Please buy from us.” **Bade** is the past tense of **bid**. Jesus bade people; He appealed or proposed to them, “Follow me.” Be my disciple. But He did so only after mingling, ministering, demonstrating compassion, and winning their trust. Notice it says “then.” The offer to follow Christ is extended only at a given point in the process, not constantly, without regard to what is going on in the relationship.

Use this five-step paradigm on a personal level. We can share Christ on an organized church level, but we cannot forget how important it is to share Him on an individual level. Relational witnessing happens while interacting with people in the context of everyday life, not through special programming or knocking on doors or talking to strangers on airplanes. It happens with people that you rub shoulders with everyday. People with whom you live and work; family, relatives, friends, neighbors, work associates, acquaintances in the community or people you know through various hobbies and activities.

Handouts in this Package

1. Why Friendship Evangelism?
2. Research Results for Friendship Evangelism
3. An Adventist Paradigm for Sharing Your Faith



Additional Resources

- Finley, Mark (1989). *Making Friends for God*. Fallbrook, CA: HART Research Center.
(This is a video seminar series with video cassettes, participant book and leader's guide.)
- Sahlin, Monte (1991). *Friendship Evangelism Seminar*. Siloam Springs, AR: Concerned Communications. (This is a seminar package that includes an instructor's guide and a participant notebook.)
- Sahlin, Monte (2003). *One Minute Witness*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry.
(This is a small, 40-page booklet that could easily be used as a textbook for the series of units on Friendship Evangelism.)
- Sahlin, Monte and Rittenour, Curtis (2001). *Friend 2 Friend: Sharing Faith with Secular People*. Lincoln, NE: Center for Creative Ministry. This is the video seminar for teaching Friendship Evangelism recommended by the North American Division. It is available with DVDs, participant book, instructor's guide and PowerPoint slides. A total of six sessions which are parallel in content to this series of units.)

Additional Resources from Other Christian Sources

- Harkey, W. G. (1988). *How to Share Good News Without Being Obnoxious About It*. Lima, OH: C.S.S. Publishing Company.
- Henderson, Jim and Casper, Matt (2007). *Jim and Casper Go to Church*. Carol Stream, IL: BarnaBooks/Tyndale House Publishers.
- Humphreys, Kent and Davidene (2000). *Show and Then Tell: Presenting the Gospel Through Daily Encounters*. Chicago: Moody Press.
- Innes, Dick (1983). *I Hate Witnessing*. Ventura, CA: Vision House.
- Martinet, Jeanne (1992). *The Art of Mingling*. New York: MJF Books.
- McIntosh, Duncan (1984). *The Everyday Evangelist*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.
- McLaren, B. D. (2001). *A New Kind of Christian*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Mittleberg, M.; Strobel, L. and Hybels, B. (1995). *Becoming a Contagious Christian*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan. (This is a video seminar with video cassette, instructor's guide and a textbook for participants. Can be presented in four two-hour sessions or eight one-hour sessions.)
- Moore, Ralph (2001). *Friends: The Key to Reaching Generation X*. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Neville, Joyce (1983). *How to Share Your Faith Without Being Offensive*. New York: The Seabury Press.

Sweeting, George (1991). *The No-Guilt Guide to Witnessing*. Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

Action Plan
& Presenter
Notes

**Friendship
Evangelism**
One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?

Discussion Questions

1. If you are a church member, why did you join the Adventist Church? (If you are not a church member, what do you think it would take to make you want to join? What kind of church are you looking for?)
2. Share some times when someone shared a need, value, or belief with you, and the conversation turned naturally to God and the things of God. How did you and the other person feel before, during, and after this conversation?
3. What are your motivations for wanting to learn about Friendship Evangelism? Be as honest as you can. Do you want to make friends, or do you want to recruit church members? Do you have other motivations you hardly recognize, yourself? What will you pray for?
4. Can you share a time when your own imperfection, perhaps embarrassing or sad-denying to you, actually deepened your friendship with another person? Why do you think this is so?

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

Discussion
Questions

**Friendship
Evangelism**
**One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?**

Group Activity

Purpose: To consider barriers to friendship evangelism and how to overcome them.

Preparation: You will need space for small groups of four with tables and writing materials.

Assignment: Divide group into teams of four. Have each group come up with four barriers or concerns that might prevent people from sharing their faith through friendship. Then list four solutions or responses to help people overcome these four barriers. Each participant may note the solution that is most helpful to them.

Debrief: In the larger group, have at least one from each table share their results. Contrast and compare the results from different tables. To close, gather in a tight circle and invite everyone to “hook arms” and fold their hands together, making a large circular chain. Mention the importance of supporting one another in the body of Christ. Remind participants that like a chain we need to encourage one another in love as we share our faith with friends. Have them imagine this circle increasing in size because new people are invited to follow Jesus.

Time: Allow 10 to 15 minutes for each group’s process, another 10 to 15 minutes for sharing, and five for the final “chain” and prayer.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

Group
Activities

Friendship
Evangelism
One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?

10

Handout 1

Why Friendship Evangelism?

Friendship evangelism is an unstructured, informal, conversational approach to sharing faith in the context of everyday life.

“The Savior **mingled** with men as one who desired their good. He **showed** his sympathy for them, **ministered** to their needs, and **won** their confidence. The he **bade** them, ‘Follow me.’” – *The Ministry of Healing*, page 143 (Emphasis supplied to highlight the verbs in this statement. “Bade” is past tense of bid, meaning proposed or invited.)

A five-step paradigm for sharing your faith was part of the presentation. Indicate the order of these steps from 1 (first) through 5 (last):

- _____ Invite people to follow Jesus
- _____ Show compassion and sympathy
- _____ Mingled with others
- _____ Win the confidence and trust of others
- _____ Minister to the needs of others

Church of Christ research showed that people who tend to stay active in church after coming to Christ describe the person who contact them about becoming a Christian as (choose one):

- A. a religious teacher
- B. a friend of mine
- C. a religious salesperson

Whom do you know, even if only on a first name basis, who does not (to the best of your knowledge) have a relationship with Christ?

People in my neighborhood:

Work associates:

Acquaintances where I do business:

Teammates in sports or hobbyists:

Relatives:

Community contacts:

Others:

Handout 2

Research Findings about Friendship Evangelism

The Center for Creative Ministry conducted a study with churches on the West Coast that have a strong track record with winning new generations of younger adults. Members of these churches were asked, “What have you observed to be the most effective method for bringing new members into your local church?”

Nearly 80 percent of the respondents said friends, relatives, acquaintances, and people talking to people are what we observe to be the way most people come into our congregations.

Around two-thirds reported it to be small group ministries. That’s also a relational approach.

The third most reported way to bring people into the church is through community service and recreation activities. The way these things bring people into the church is through opportunities for people to rub shoulders with each other, talk informally, and form friendships.

Way down the list, maybe one-third of the people named some of the traditional evangelistic program such as Revelation Seminars, a pastor’s Bible class, or public meetings. Bible lessons are at the end of the list.

You might think this study was conducted only in an elite, avant-garde set of churches. Not so. The same question was asked in a larger sample of all churches, urban, rural, small, and large. The numbers are lower because many of these churches are not growing, and members don’t observe many new people coming in as compared to the first study. But friendship evangelism is the highest category, and some of the more traditional approaches are way down the list.

Church of Christ Research

Another piece of research outside Adventist churches confirms the critical role of friendship evangelism in retaining members of the church. The Church of Christ denomination is headquartered in Texas and has about 300,000 members.

After a yearlong emphasis on evangelism in all its churches in the southwest, its seminary did in-depth research on how people come to Christ and come into the church.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

HANDOUT

Friendship
Evangelism
One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?

More than 1,200 in-depth, face-to-face interviews were done during this year of evangelism. People fell into three categories with about 400 in each.

First, there were about 400 converts still active in the church more than a year after joining. The next category involved converts that dropped out that first year. Finally, there were about 400 people who did not join the church, despite being contacted, and attending small groups, seminars, and evangelistic meetings.

During these 1,200 interviews, the question was asked, “Who was the person that contacted you about becoming a Christian and joining the church?” The follow-up question was “What relationship do you have with that person?” Although the primary reason for doing the survey was to assess certain evangelistic programs, these questions resulted in the most important finding.

A high correlation of responses was discovered among each of these three groups. Among those who didn’t become converts, most said, “That person was a religious teacher.” Among those who joined the church but dropped out within the first year, people said, “This person was a kind of religious salesman.”

But among those who accepted Christ, joined the church, and were still active members a year later, many replied, “This person was a friend of mine.” In many cases they meant this was somebody they knew before the evangelism emphasis came along. In a high percentage of cases among the “dropouts” and “unconverted,” the person who contacted them was a stranger, someone who came to their door. The bottom line is that people come to Christ and into the church and stay primarily through relationships.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

HANDOUT

**Friendship
Evangelism**
**One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?**

Handout 3

An Adventist Paradigm for Sharing Your Faith

There is an Adventist paradigm for friendship evangelism in our heritage. A paradigm is a model, framework, or example through which we see and act. Ellen White wrote a statement originally published in the book *The Ministry of Healing*. On page 143 she speaks of Christ's example as our model for ministry.

“Christ’s method alone gives true success in reaching people.” Notice the implication that some successful evangelism isn’t true success. Remember that category from the Church of Christ research of people who said that salesman brought them into the church but before a year was over they were back out?

As we continue with the quote, notice the verbs. “The Savior **mingled** with men as one who desired their good. He **showed** his sympathy for them, **ministered** to their needs, and **won** their confidence. The he **bade** them, ‘Follow me.’”

These five verbs progress deeper and deeper into a relationship; mingling, showing sympathy, ministering to needs, winning trust, and inviting people to follow Jesus.

iFollow
Discipleship
Series:
Working
with Jesus

HANDOUT

Friendship
Evangelism
One: Why
Friendship
Evangelism?